

VZCZCXRO6838
PP RUEHDE
DE RUEHKU #2822 1931544
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 121544Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5754
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 002822

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FOR NEA/ARP AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/12/2016
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KU](#) [NATIONAL ASSEMBLY](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT ESTABLISHES COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS THE
CONDITION OF STATELESS ARABS

REF: A. KUWAIT 2821
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 2600

Classified By: CDA Matthew Tueller for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) In its inaugural session on July 12, Kuwait's new Parliament voted unanimously to establish a committee for dealing with the over 100,000 "Bidoon" -- Arabs with no legal documentation proving their citizenship -- living in Kuwait. The proposal for the committee was initiated by MP Khudair Al-Enezi, and approved overwhelmingly by the National Assembly. The main issues faced by the Bidoon include the inability to get legal documents such as birth and marriage certificates, which in turn makes it difficult to get jobs. Bidoon also do not have access to the extremely generous health benefits afforded to Kuwaitis and have not been allowed to attend government schools since the first Gulf War (though the GOK eased school restrictions last year for primary education). The Bidoon largely live in poverty, with very high unemployment rates and a rising crime rate. Al-Enezi declared that the formation of the parliamentary committee constituted the first step toward solving this human rights issue.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Comment: In the past, MPs have raised the Bidoon issue, but few have truly committed to addressing it. Since Bidoon cannot vote, it was not in any MP's interest to fight for their rights. With the participation of women in Kuwaiti politics, however, the Bidoon have found a voice in Kuwaiti politics. Many Kuwaiti women are married to Bidoon Arabs or to Arabs of other nationalities. Kuwaiti law does not allow these women to pass citizenship to their children and they cannot receive many of the social benefits afforded to Kuwaiti families, since a family is defined as a household headed by a Kuwaiti man. These "forgotten women" have become a political force now that they can vote. Aliya Al-Enezi, a candidate in the recent National Assembly elections, is married to a Bidoon who fought for the Kuwaiti army in 1990 and was held prisoner by the Iraqis. She told PolOff that in the 2003 elections only one candidate, Awad Barad, had included the Bidoon among his priorities. She said the Bidoon felt he had forgotten about them once he got into office, and she said this was the reason he was voted out of office in 2006. If the new committee makes progress on addressing the Bidoon issue, it may be an indirect result of women's participation in the elections. End Comment.

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